Report of the Advocacy Committee
June 2025 through April 2026 Term
For NAJIT's Annual Business Meeting

Committee Membership

The Advocacy Committee (AC) held monthly Zoom meetings throughout the term, except for August 2025 and February 2026. Members collectively bring approximately 195 years of expertise in delivering or managing court interpreting services to the AC's work.–The committee currently comprises twelve members from eleven jurisdictions, representing three languages:

Jurisdiction	Member	Language(s)
District of Columbia	**Ellen Wingo**	**Spanish**
Illinois	**Nattalia Paterson, Ph.D.**	**Portuguese**
Maryland	**Garrett M. Bradford**	**Portuguese & Spanish**
Maryland	**Lili Selden, Ph.D.**	**Japanese**
Missouri	**Sara D. Gardner**	**Spanish**
Nebraska	**Kelly Z. Várguez**	**Spanish**
New Jersey	**Robert Joe Lee, Acting Chair**	**—**
Oregon	**Chantalina M. Portillo, Ph.D.**	**Spanish**
Pennsylvania	**Lois Weaver**	**Spanish**
Tennessee	**Coral Getino, Ph.D.**	**Spanish**
Virginia	**Elizabeth Hand**	**Spanish**
Washington	**Laura Gillian Hurley**	**Spanish**

Partnerships and Coalitions

The AC actively maintained and expanded partnerships with allied organizations to facilitate timely communication and strengthen collective advocacy efforts:

National Coalition for Language Access (NCFLA): Monthly attendance at meetings convened by Dr. William Rivers, organized in response to Executive Order 14224 (cf., https://ncfla.org/).

Association Advocacy Coalition (AAC): Biweekly meetings with representatives from the following associations:

- American Association of Interpreters and Translators in Education (AAITE),
- American Translators Association (ATA),
- Association of Language Companies (ALC),

- Canadian Language Industry Association (CLIA)/Association canadienne de l'industrie de la langue (ACIL),
- Certification Commission for Healthcare Interpreters (CCHI),
- National Council on Interpreting in Health Care (NCIHC), and
- Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID).

ATA/NAJIT Informal Working Group: The Acting Chair and one member of the AC began participating in a new WhatsApp group including the Chair of ATA's Advocacy Committee as well as the Chair and one member of ATA's Public Relations Committee. It was formed to expedite communications between the two associations for expeditious processing of issues of mutual concern, starting with the National Center for State Court's announcement that several of its exams were indefinitely suspended due to concerns about their possibly having been compromised.

National Center for State Courts (NCSC): Continued dialogue with staff of the Language Access Services Section (LASS) to build communication channels and explore collaboration with the Council of Language Access Coordinators (CLAC) and Language Access Advisory Committee (LAAC).

Meenu Batra Solidarity Letter: Endorsed ATA-drafted letter expressing support for Texas interpreter Meenu Batra, who was detained by immigration agents in mid-March. The letter was sent April 17, 2026.

Legislative Actions

The AC completed the following advocacy actions related to proposed federal and state legislation,[1] listed by submission date:

July 15, 2025: Submitted a letter to the Wisconsin legislature urging rejection of SB357, which would have permitted the use of artificial intelligence as a substitute for or supplement to human interpreters in court proceedings. Endorsed by ALC, AAITE, ATA, and CCHI. This effort involved much work monitoring developments and communicating with partners.

April 1, 2026: Endorsed H.R. 1061, the *Protecting Sensitive Locations Act* reintroduced by Rep. Adriano Espaillat (D-NY-13). The bill would restrict immigration enforcement actions at sensitive locations, including-"any Federal, State, or local courthouse, including the office of an individual's legal counsel or representative, and a probation office."

April 1, 2026: Endorsed H.R. 7223, the *Language Access for All Act of 2026* introduced by Rep. Grace Meng (D-NY-6), and submitted recommendations for strengthening the bill. The press release issued by the Asian Pacific American Caucus on January 23, 2026, described the bill as follows: "The *Language Access for All Act of 2026* modernizes and strengthens the federal

[1] The public comments on legislation and court policies may be found at https://najit.org/about-us/najit-advocacy/.

government's approach to language access by codifying EO 13166 and establishing a coordinated, accountable framework to ensure meaningful access for individuals with limited English proficiency. The legislation promotes consistency across agencies, increases transparency and public engagement, and updates federal language access policy to reflect evolving technologies."

April 3, 2026: Submitted letters in support of SB3238/HB2005 to the Hawai'i Senate Ways and Means Committee and the House Finance Committee. The bill would appropriate funds for the University of Hawai'i to develop an interpreter qualification education program. While generally supportive, the AC identified several provisions requiring revision and included those recommendations. Endorsed by AAITE, ALC, ATA, CCHI, CLIA, and NCIHC.

State Judiciary Policy Actions

The AC also engaged with proposed changes to state court rules and policies, listed by submission date:

July 2, 2025 – Ohio Supreme Court: In May 2025, the Court published proposed amendments to interpreter-related provisions in the Rules of Superintendence for the Courts of Ohio. The AC conducted a comprehensive review and submitted detailed recommendations.

August 1, 2025 - Michigan Supreme Court (Rule 1.111, initial proposal): The Court invited comment on proposed amendments that would prohibit reimbursement for interpreter services in criminal cases, revise definitions of "interpret," "certified foreign language interpreter," and "qualified foreign language interpreter," and introduce a definition for "registered interpreter firm." The AC submitted recommendations urging the Court to incorporate its input in the final rule.

March 1, 2026 – Michigan Supreme Court (Rule 1.111, supplemental proposal): Following amendments that took effect on January 1, 2026, the Court invited comment on an additional change that would expand free foreign language interpretation services to civil cases. The AC submitted a letter recommending approval of the proposed expansion. Endorsed by AAITE, ATA, ALC, CCHI, and NCIHC.

Member Outreach and Resources

The AC maintained the following channels to keep NAJIT members informed and support local advocacy efforts:

Advocacy Toolkit: Maintained the toolkit originally posted in 2023-2024 (https://najit.org/advocacy-tool-kit/); and

Advocacy Committee Corner: Published in most issues of *Cybernews*.

Consultation and Field Support

The AC provided guidance and monitored developments in jurisdictions across the country:

Cook County, Illinois: Provided support to interpreter groups seeking improved working conditions in the Circuit Court of Cook County, including communications with court interpreters and Melissa Dai, Investigative Intern with Injustice Watch. Outreach to Ann Wohlmuth, ASL interpreter appointed to the court's newly formed Language Access Committee, is pending.

Luzerne County, Pennsylvania: Held a conference call with a local interpreter to address court-related concerns.

Federal AI and Certification Concerned: Received a request from a federally certified contract interpreter regarding the use of AI in U.S. Attorney offices and non-compliance with certification requirements for Spanish interpreters in a U.S. District Court. The AC is evaluating how to proceed.

Internal Operations

The AC took several steps to improve its efficiency and institutional practices:

- Established protocols for streamlining the writing and review process of advocacy letters.
- Adopted an internal review process for articles submitted to Advocacy Corner in NAJIT's *Cybernews,* ensuring committee-wide input before publication.
- Conducted a structured self-evaluation to identify areas for improvement and clarify expectations for committee leadership.
- Attended Board of Directors meetings and welcomed a newly designated Board liaison.

Pending Projects from 2025-2026

The following projects are expected to be finalized by or shortly after the 2026 Annual Business Meeting:

NAJIT Advocacy Survey Report: Complete and publish findings from February 2024 membership survey.

Survey Follow-up: Send promised updates on state-level advocacy initiatives to survey respondents who requested them.

Law Enforcement Encounter Guide: Complete and publish *Legal Interpreters: A Guide for What to Do If Your Assignment Is Interrupted by Law Enforcement Action,* which was inspired by AAITE's *Guidance for Interpreters During Unexpected Law Enforcement Encounters.*

Advocacy History Page: Finalize the expansion of NAJIT's advocacy history (https://najit.org/about-us/najit-advocacy/) by adding documents predating mid-2007. Several items were added this term, but a few errors have been identified and submitted for correction.

Website Revisions: Complete enhancements to NAJIT's Advocacy webpage.

Goals for 2026-2027

- Continue processing advocacy support requests from court interpreters nationwide.
- Develop an onboarding procedure for incoming committee members.
- Strengthen the committee by recruiting new members from constituencies not currently represented.
- Complete the collection and publication of documents on local advocacy efforts by individual court interpreters and interpreter groups in a new section of NAJIT's website.

Respectfully Submitted April 20, 2026
Robert Joe Lee, Acting Chair